

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4305

August 11, 2011

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

I write to express my deep concerns regarding press reports of an ATF “gun-walking” program that allegedly operated in the state of Texas. I request that the Department of Justice immediately brief my office regarding the scope and details of any past or present ATF “gun-walking” programs operated in the state of Texas.

As you are aware, recent congressional investigations have revealed the existence of a controversial “gun-walking” program operated by the ATF in Phoenix, Arizona. As a part of that program, known as “Operation Fast and Furious,” ATF agents instructed federally licensed firearms dealers to illegally sell more than 1,000 weapons to straw purchasers working for drug cartels in Mexico. These ATF agents were also ordered by their superiors to ignore well-established practice and refrain from interdicting these weapons before they flowed into the hands of Mexican drug cartels. Sadly, this ill-advised program had tragic consequences, with these “walked” weapons showing up at the scene of multiple violent crimes—including the murder of United States Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry.

Unfortunately, the Department of Justice has been less than forthcoming during congressional investigations into the failed “Operation Fast and Furious.” For instance, Assistant Attorney General Ronald Weich initially told Congress that the allegation that “ATF sanctioned or otherwise knowingly allowed the sale of assault weapons to a straw purchaser who then transported them into Mexico—is false.” Additionally, Acting ATF Director Kenneth Melson told congressional investigators that “ATF’s senior leadership would have preferred to be more cooperative” with the congressional investigation of “Operation Fast and Furious,” but “Justice Department officials directed [ATF] not to respond and took full control of replying to briefing and document requests from Congress.”

I believe it is important that you promptly disclose the details of any past or present Texas-based ATF “gun-walking” program similar to “Operation Fast and Furious.” My constituents deserve a full accounting of any such activities in Texas. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator